



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



Maine Service Fellows

- ❖ Maine Service Fellows is a proposed new program of Volunteer Maine, the state service commission. The program mission is threefold:
 - provide human resources dedicated to helping communities respond to and recover from the local impacts of the COVID pandemic;
 - engage recent college graduates in full-time service to rural Maine communities to address local unmet needs through volunteer-driven solutions;
 - leverage the proven link between intense community service experiences and positive attachment to a community as a way to attract and retain talented young adults to Maine's rural areas. During the 26 years the Commission has administered Maine AmeriCorps grants, its data shows young adults who move to Maine for service tend to stay as residents when their obligation is complete.

The Maine Service Fellows program is modeled on several successful programs in other states. It is designed for small communities and micro-organizations in rural areas where the greatest assets are human resources and the greatest need is someone to devote time to developing or implementing a volunteer-driven solution to a problem. The program also responds to a need to provide communities help more quickly than AmeriCorps which can take up to a year from application to implementation.

Although Service Fellows will make up a single corps, they will be dispersed to serve with sponsoring organizations in rural communities. While they are providing direct service, they will build the capacity the host organization to recruit and mobilize volunteers. They also will commit up to 20% of their time to developing regional networks of volunteer leaders and programs whose common or complementary goals would benefit from sharing information or collaborating.

- ❖ Program Launch. Maine Service Fellows aims to launch an inaugural class of 8 Fellows in 2021. Fellows will serve full-time for up to 1,800 hours over 12 months and will receive a modest stipend (212% of federal poverty level for single member household; \$27,000 in 2020), health insurance* (\$300/month), and accident/injury insurance coverage (\$300/yr) during service.
- ❖ Focus Areas for Projects. Communities seeking to host a Maine Service Fellow may propose a COVID recovery project work plan to address *any* emerging or persistent local need. Of particular interest to Volunteer Maine are projects addressing:
 - Housing including prevention of eviction
 - Workforce development
 - Substance use prevention and recovery
 - Public health issues including mental health

In November 2020, the Commission brought together a 25-member focus group to design the final elements of the Service Fellows program. The "Think Tank" participants represented small municipal offices, nonprofits, school districts, elected officials, and businesses located in Madison, Lincolnville, Dresden, Lewiston, Skowhegan, Portland, West Bath, Rockland, Ellsworth, Oakland, New Sharon, Durham, Winthrop, and a few more places in between.

At one point the group was what they expected Fellows to do. While the replies varied from reopening after-school programs to connecting homeless people with services to supporting municipal projects to expand broadband and increase digital literacy, all said the priority issues are likely to change as the pandemic deepens and community capacity to respond is diminished or exhausted.

*The program could access health insurance offered to AmeriCorps through the Corps Network. Total position cost, just under \$28,000.
Rv.12.11.2020